

A photograph of a church interior, showing rows of wooden pews facing a sanctuary. The sanctuary features a large, colorful stained glass window and a wooden altar. The ceiling is made of exposed wooden beams with several pendant lights hanging from it. The overall atmosphere is warm and inviting.

SEPTEMBER 9, 2020

AGAPE FROM AFAR

Adjusting to life amidst Coronavirus

A WORD
FROM
PASTOR
JILL

As a way to remain connected during this time apart, I will be putting together a weekly newsletter with a reflection based on the upcoming Sunday scripture passage. I hope that by taking a few moments to reflect on the Word of God and pray, we can feel grounded and connected to God and to one another during this uncertain time. *-Pastor Jill*



The scripture for this week is Matthew 18:21-35. In this passage Peter asks Jesus how many times we should forgive someone. Peter suggests the very low number of 7 times. Jesus tells him we should forgive 77 times. Jesus then tells a parable about a servant who is forgiven of a large debt but refuses to forgive a fellow slave who owes him a small sum of money. Reflect more on this passage and what it means for us today on the following pages.



Read the passage:

Matthew 18:21-35

Then Peter came and said to him, "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times." For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow-slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, 'Pay what you owe.' Then his fellow-slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow-slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow-slave, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he should pay his entire debt. So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart."



Reflect:

1. What is the difference between forgiving and condoning?
2. What are some of the reasons why you find it difficult to forgive someone who has wronged you or hurt you in some way?
3. How does your experience of God's mercy impact your willingness and your ability to forgive others?
4. What is this passage calling you to do today? This week?

Pray:

Dear God, help us to forgive 77 times, when we only want to forgive 7 times. Remind us of the continual forgiveness that you offer to us, so that we can be forgiving toward others. Amen.



A few years ago the UCC started the "Be the Church" campaign to invigorate churches, using the above graphic for banners, t-shirts and coffee mugs. One of the slogans that went along with this campaign was **"Don't just go to church, be the church!"**

Currently, that slogan doesn't work as well as it once did, because going to church is different--it's socially distant and virtual. While what it means to **go** to church is different from even six months ago, what it means to **be** the church has not changed.

Beginning this Sunday, September 13 until November 15, I will be preaching on one of the aspects of being the church from the above banner. Each week, we will explore what it means to be the church particularly in light of all the ways the church has changed in recent months.

The Wednesday evening adult education class will also be exploring "Be the Church" via Zoom each Wednesday evening at 7:00 p.m. Each week, they will be discussing the section of the UCC's "Be the Church" campaign for the upcoming Sunday. This week is: Forgiven Often. Contact Val Sutton if you would like to participate.

Looking forward to learning together how we can continue to "Be the Church" even in this unusual time!

What Pastor Jill is
reading:
See No Stranger by
Valarie Kaur

What Pastor Jill is
watching:
Black Panther

What Pastor Jill is
listening to:
The Confessional Podcast

**Please reach out to
a staff member if
you need financial,
emotional or
spiritual assistance.
As always, we are
here to help!**

**First Church of
Lombard
220 S. Main Street
Lombard, IL 60148
630-629-2630**

info@firstchurchoflombard.org



Fifty people (including staff & volunteers) may gather in the sanctuary, another 50 people may watch the service live-streamed in Hatfield Hall. Families are encouraged to worship in Hatfield Hall where there are worship activity bags and plenty of room to spread out. Worship will continue to be available online to watch from home.

Before Coming to In-person Worship:

1. If you have any symptoms or have been in close contact with someone with Covid within the last 14 days, we ask that you watch worship from home.
2. Sign up ahead of time on the online pew pad to assist with contact tracing. Everyone (including staff and volunteers) needs to register online (link emailed on Thursdays), by phone (630-620-2630 x210), or in person on Sundays.
3. You may access the bulletin on your device ahead of time or print it out at home and bring it with you. The bulletin will also be on the screen.

Arriving at Worship:

1. Doors will open at 9:45. Plan to arrive by 10:10 so everyone may be seated.
2. You must wear a mask covering your mouth and nose.
3. You must sanitize your hands and have a temperature check before entering the building.
4. To maintain social distance, you will be directed when to enter the sanctuary or Hatfield Hall and will go directly to your seat and be seated.
5. Seating in the sanctuary and Hatfield Hall will be socially distanced and will be filled from the front to the back.
6. Members of the same household will be seated together.

During Worship:

1. Worship will be 30-40 minutes long.
2. Music will be instrumental and there will be no congregational singing.
4. Children will go directly to Sunday School or remain with their family for the entire service.
5. Offering will be collected by the doors.
6. Worship responses will be call and response or viewable on the screen.
7. Dismissal at the end of the worship will be by household.
8. Restrooms will be available, but to maintain social distancing only one person may occupy the restroom at a time.

After worship:

1. Congregating in the building will not be permitted.
2. Weather permitting, outdoor coffee hour may be held.

We will continue to reassess and make adjustments as we determine how best to move forward. While worship will look different, we know that the Spirit of God will be present as we gather together in this new way and as many continue to join us virtually, too.

First Church of Lombard
220 S. Main Street
Lombard, IL 60148
630-629-2630
info@firstchurchoflombard.org